

from its barren uniformity would be as uninteresting as an ocean of sand. But it does more than please by affording this diversity. It calls into play many principles and affections which are the parents of numerous virtues, and which are productive of much good to society. Activity is the soul of happiness; but this would be withered if knowledge and its various applications to the purposes of life were not progressive. And why may not this remark apply to religious knowledge as well as to science in general? Nay, it seems more applicable to this than to any other species of knowledge. For, since it is above all others, the most interesting and important, the mind will most readily engage in the pursuit of it, and the habits of investigation which are thus formed will be extended to other branches, and carry them also forward in the march of improvement. How intimate the connection of human and divine science is, and how much advancement in the one is calculated to improve the other, the history of literature since the 14th century may shew. What important advantages have within these few years been derived from this improvement in science in several of the arts of life! It must appear, therefore, that it is best to acquire our knowledge of religion, as we do knowledge in general—progressively, and by labour and attention; and in order to this, that there should be a field of inquiry sufficient to engage the most exalted minds in every period of the world. The christian revelation is of this character, and, therefore, the objection we are now refuting, that it ought to have been clear to all men without much labour, so far from being a valid objection is really a beauty, and a proof of its suitability to the condition of man.

It ought to be remembered, moreover, that the christian revelation was not given to satisfy a prying curiosity, but to relieve the urgent necessities of man, to dispel his darkness, and to supply the deficiencies of natural light. That it is sufficient for these purposes, the beneficial effects which it has produced in 13 centuries, is a proof. And surely it possesses the most striking characteristic of a divine gift, if it can produce "peace on earth and good will among men," and promote a pure and rational worship of the true God; and this it has done whenever its genuine influences have prevailed. And why should men spurn at such a gift because it is possible to conceive perhaps that it might have been greater? Why refuse the part because more is not bestowed! It would surely be much more consistent with our condition to be thankful for what is given, and to use it well, and the more so because we are permitted to hope that a fuller

manifestation of things is reserved for those who piously use the light that has been afforded; but though we now know only in part, hereafter that which is in part shall be done away. The dimness of twilight now overspreads many a prospect which that twilight alone discloses. The light will become more diffused, and, though like the rising sun, it may occasionally be obscured by passing clouds, yet the meridian of complete knowledge will come, when all that concerns us, and that can exalt the attributes of Deity will be brightly disclosed.

There are many considerations suggested by scripture and supported by reason which cherish this pleasing hope. The soul of man being immortal and capable of indefinite degrees of improvement in knowledge and goodness there is reason to suppose that such a destination awaits it when disencumbered from mortality. Revelation teaches us to hope for a more perfect condition of being; and what is so well calculated to improve a moral being as to know and admire the character, works, and procedure of the great Creator? This admiration and praise seems to be the constant employment of the heavenly hosts of all orders, and since Deity must delight the more in his creatures the nearer their resemblance is to himself, he will delight most in the homage of his most intelligent worshippers. To suppose that man holds the summit of the scale in the rank of created intelligences, is to entertain a mean idea of the universe of God, and to suppose that his improvement is bounded by his mortal existence, is to place him an anomalous and abortive thing among those creatures that we know. How much more congenial to the exalted hopes of the soul that it shall advance on in an endless career of improvement—that the highest attainments man can make in knowledge and virtue in the present state, are incomparably more insignificant than are the attainments of an infant compared with those of the wisest and the best man that the world ever saw. If such a high destiny be indeed reserved for man, there is no more wonder that we should be perplexed with difficulties in the present stage of our progress, than that a mere tyro should be perplexed with some of the higher theorems of geometry, should he attempt them when he has just commenced the elements. And to adduce these difficulties as arguments against the truth of the christian revelation, would not be less absurd than would be the conduct of the tyro were he to maintain the falsity of any theorem, incomprehensible to him, because he had not yet acquired the knowledge necessary to make him understand it; for we know only in part and we prophecy in part.